



## Don't Kid Around

Louisiana's only citizen surveillance  
child occupant protection program

**Final Report: May 1995 - July 2002**

"I am calling because I received information from your office. I just want you to know that I am certainly very appreciative of your information....you sent me information because somebody loved me enough to call in that I was driving with my little girl not buckled in . I want you all to know that I am going to do my best to do better and I appreciate your sending me the information. I just wanted you all to know that. Thank you so much."

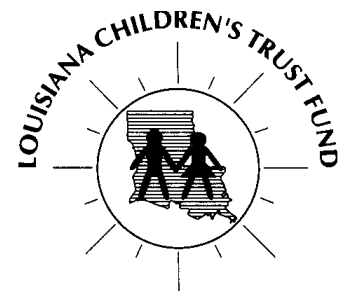
Name and plate number withheld from publication.

Message left: February 8, 2001 5:13 pm

Sponsors:



1997



A Brighter Tomorrow For Louisiana's Children

1998-2002

# Don't Kid Around

Louisiana's child occupant protection citizen surveillance program  
of the Louisiana SAFE KIDS, Inc.

Final report: May, 1995-July, 2002

## Introduction

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Each year, 1,400 U.S. children less than 15 years old die and an estimated 170,000 are injured in motor vehicle crashes. Traffic crashes are the leading cause of unintentional injury and death for Louisiana's children. When used correctly, child safety seats reduce the rate of crash related death and serious injury by 70 percent.

In 1999, 27 Louisiana children less than 5 years old died in motor vehicle crashes. An estimated 1,134 Louisiana children less than five years of age were hospitalized and 30,300 were seen in our state's emergency rooms.

The *Don't Kid Around* program, an educational outreach project of Louisiana SAFE KIDS, is an effort to increase public awareness of the need for *increased* use and *proper* use of child safety seats and seat belts. Unlike other child occupant protection programs, the awareness efforts are targeted toward the actual drivers who transport small children in violation of Louisiana's child safety restraint laws.

When a concerned citizen sees a young child being transported unrestrained, he or she fills out a postage-paid postcard (Appendix A). When Louisiana SAFE KIDS receives the postcard, a letter about child restraint laws and child safety seats is forwarded to the vehicle owner. Also sent with the letter are brochures on correct car seat use, discount coupon for a child safety seat and a yellow reply card which recipients can use to request child safety information such as fire and poisoning prevention (Appendix B). Cosco safety seat coupons were offered beginning in December, 1997.

This project is strictly an educational effort. There is no follow up and no identifying records, such as license plate number, name or address, are kept.

## Sponsorship

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Special thanks for program support from Children's Hospital and the Louisiana Office of Public Health, the lead agencies of Louisiana SAFE KIDS, and the corporate sponsors, AAA (1997), and the Louisiana Children's Trust Fund (1998 - 2002).

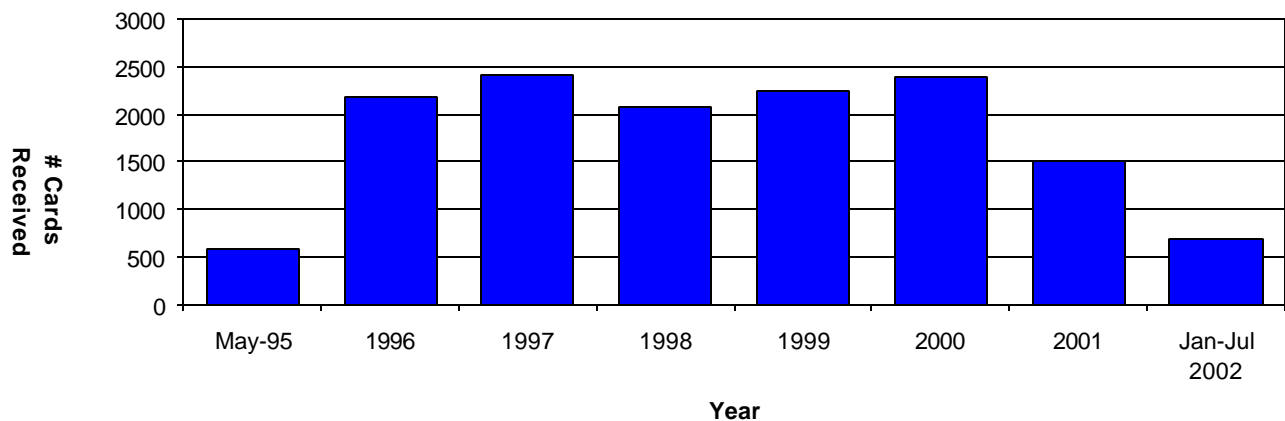
*Thank you!*

## Citizen participation and vehicle owner parish of residence

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The *Don't Kid Around* program was piloted in May 1995 with an official statewide implementation in late August. From May, 1995 to July, 2002 a total of 14,092 cards were received by Louisiana SAFE KIDS. The program was discontinued on July 10, 2002. By August 23, 2002 an additional 180 cards were received by Louisiana SAFE KIDS.

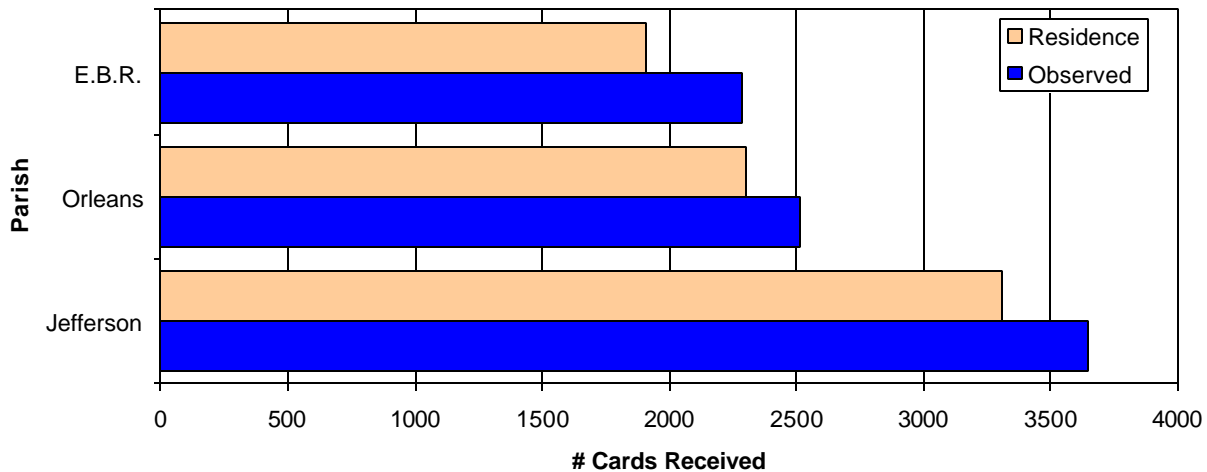
**Figure 1 - Number of cards received by Louisiana SAFE KIDS by year**  
(N=14,092)



*Don't Kid Around* included observations of unrestrained children in all 64 parishes. Educational materials were sent to drivers in all parishes. The top three parishes of observation and vehicle owner residence were areas with high populations: Jefferson, Orleans and East Baton Rouge (EBR) (Figure 2).

The top three parishes of observation accounted for 59.9% (8448/14,092) of vehicles observed. The top three parishes of vehicle owner residence accounted for 53.3% (7519/14,092) of total vehicle owners. Almost seven out of every 10 cards, 68.5%, had the same parish of residence as observation.

**Figure 2** - Number of cards received for top parishes of observation (N=8448) and parishes of residence of vehicle owner (N=7519)

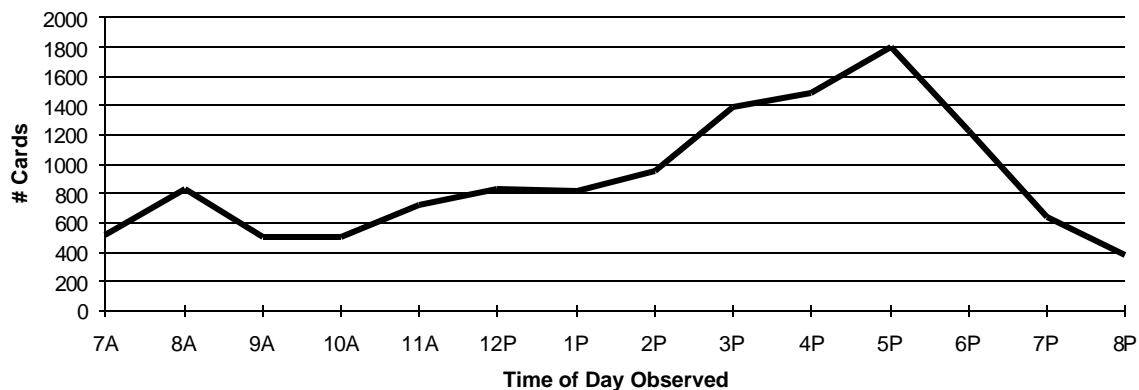


## Time of observation

Of postcards that included complete time of observation (N=13,145), more than half (57%, 7,496) of the vehicles were seen in the afternoon between 2 and 7 o'clock (Figure 3). These are high traffic times; when children are being brought home from child care and drivers are going home from work. Participants in *Don't Kid Around* are also more likely to be on the road at these times.

Although the referral cards included separate sections for AM and PM, some cards (n=947, 7%) did not contain adequate time data. For example, observers indicated AM or PM without designating an hour.

**Figure 3** - Don't Kid Around  
Number of observations by time of day  
(n=13,145)

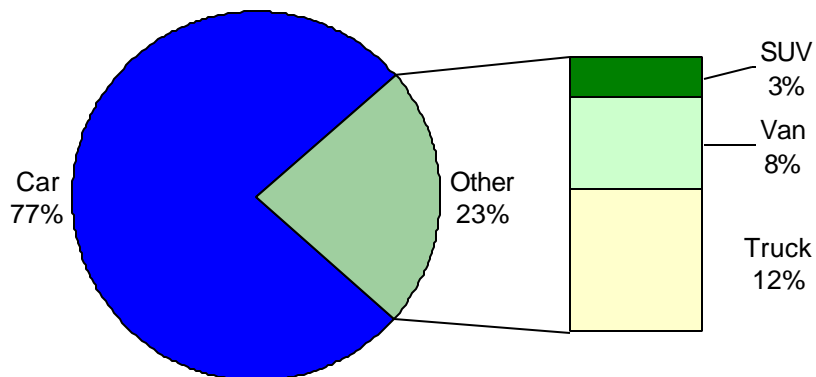


## Vehicle type

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Approximately one-third (33.5%) of the vehicles observed were relatively new or new vehicles, manufactured from 1996 to the present. The most frequently reported vehicles (14.2%) were 1999 and 2000 models. Three in four observed vehicles were cars, followed by pickup trucks, vans and sport-utility vehicles (Figure 4).

**Figure 4 - Type of vehicles observed (N=14,047)**



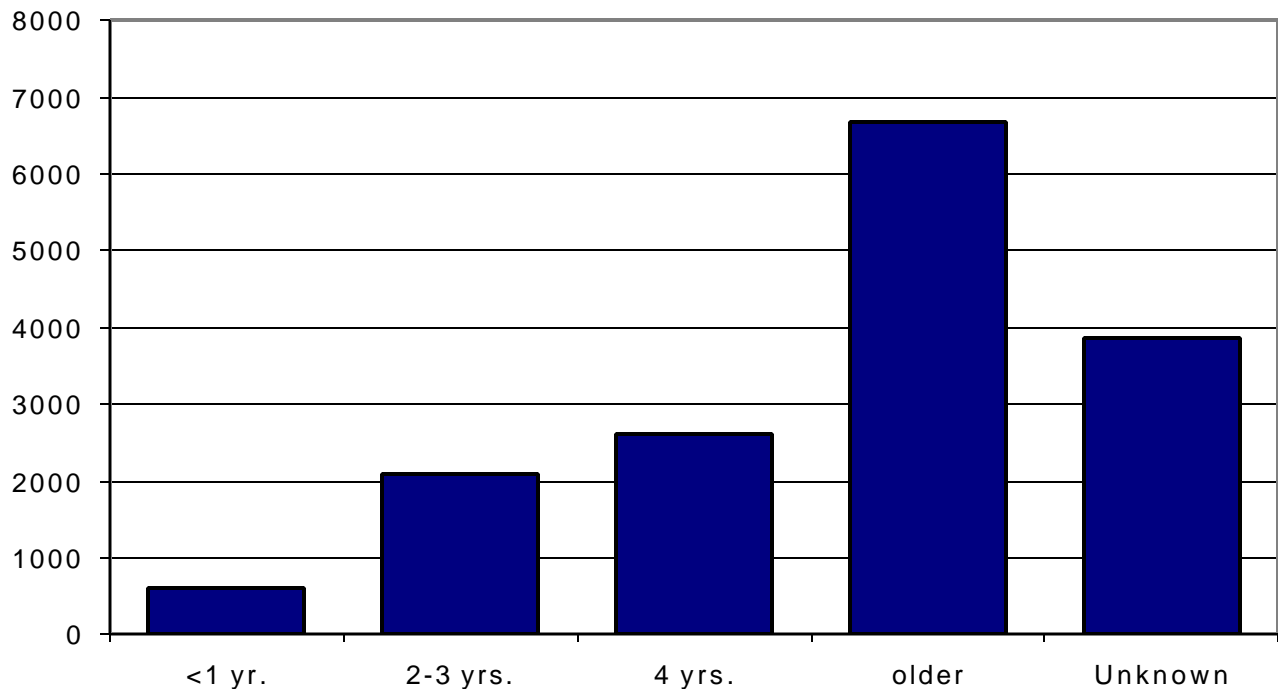
## Ages of children

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As of July 1, 1997, according to Louisiana's child restraint law: **Children under age thirteen must be buckled up when riding in either the front or back seat of a motor vehicle. Three and four year olds must ride in a child safety seat when in the front seat. If a three or four year old child rides in the back seat, a safety belt may be substituted for a child safety seat.**

Observers were asked to estimate the ages of the child passengers. Seventy-six percent of the 15,869 children observed as a part of *Don't Kid Around* had their ages estimated by the observer. Children older than 4 years old comprised 56 percent of all children observed, followed by four year olds (22%), 2 to 3 year olds (17%), and infants 1 year or younger (5%).

**Figure 5 - Estimated ages of children observed in vehicles**  
(N=15,869)



Observers often utilized the “comments” section on the referral cards. Most comments included information about ages, restraint status and location of the child in the vehicle. Examples include: “Child in front seat. Car seat was in the back but not used” and “infant on driver’s lap”. Occasionally, observers added comments about speed and possible drug or alcohol use.

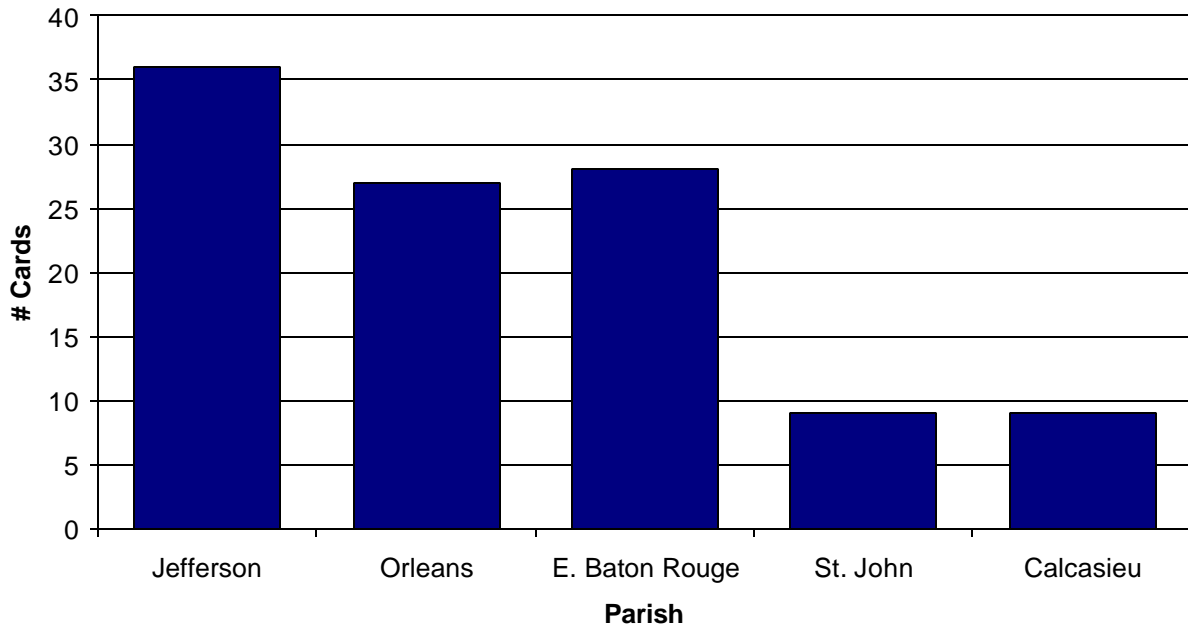
## **Return/information request cards**

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Record keeping of vehicle owners who used the yellow return card to request additional information and materials was not instituted until 1996. Since January 1996, 145 yellow cards were returned from 28 (44%) parishes. Not surprisingly, information requesters had a parish of residence pattern similar to the observed vehicle owners. They were mainly from Jefferson and Orleans Parishes (21.3% and 16.6%, respectively), East Baton Rouge Parish (15.2%), St. John Parish (5.5%) and Calcasieu Parish (5.5%) (Figure 6).

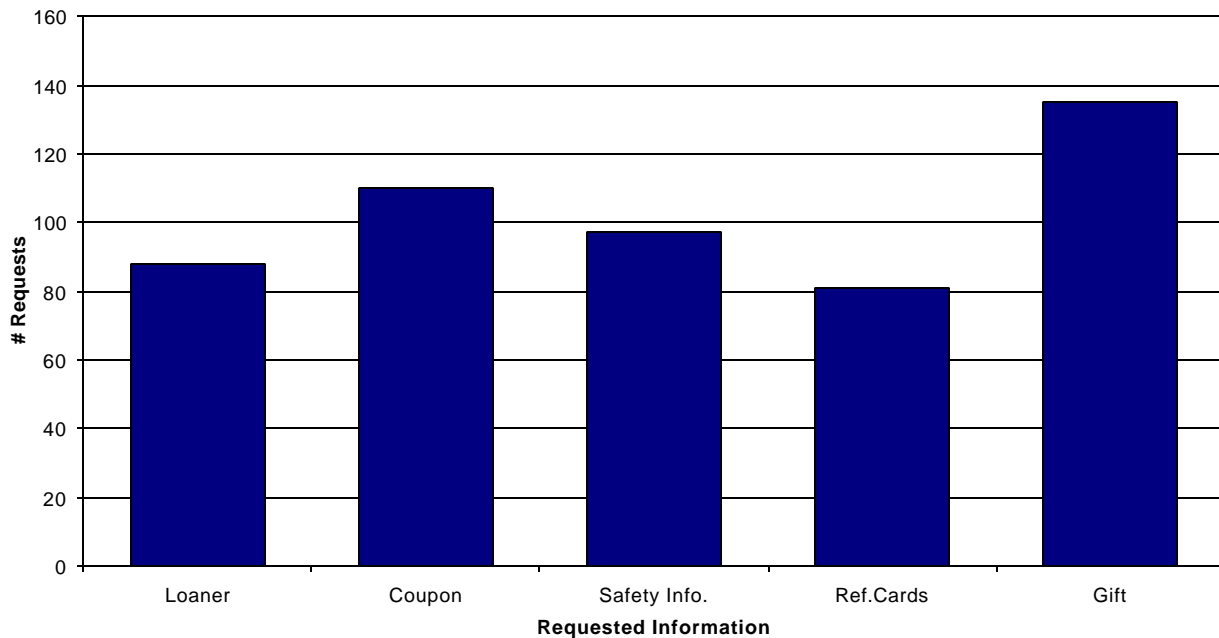
Although this was originally intended as a way to monitor if people actually read the materials, the return was .026% at it’s highest (1997) which is negligible.

**Figure 6 - Parish of residence for return cards (N=178)**



Vehicle owners had the option of requesting a variety of items from Louisiana SAFE KIDS: a rebate coupon from Cosco, safety information, blue referral cards and/or a free gift. The most frequent requests were for the gift, child safety seat coupon/rebate voucher, and safety information (Figure 7).

**Figure 7 - Type of materials requested by vehicle owners (N=178)**



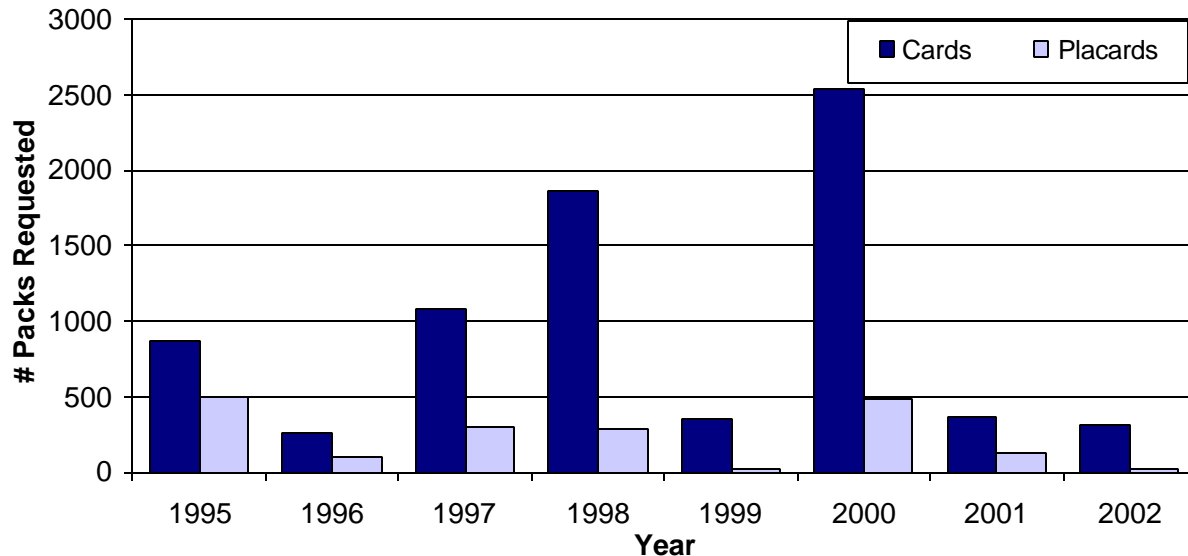
## Don't Kid Around Partners

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The success of the *Don't Kid Around* program was largely due to the groups and organizations across the state who offered the blue referral cards to staff and clients. The dramatic increase in the number of packs of cards requested by these partners in 2000 (Figure 8) was due, in large part, to a “reminder” mailing. At that time, partners were offered more materials using a simple order form. The fact that a reminder mailing was not sent out may account for the extreme decrease in requested materials in 2001. Although planned for the second quarter, a 2002 reminder mailing was not sent out.

NOTE: The numbers in Figure 8 do not include the hundreds of packs of cards distributed through community fairs and events.

**Figure 8 - Materials requested by Don't Kid Around partners by year**  
(packs of cards, N=7959; placards, N=1856)



Most *Don't Kid Around* partners work in the health field as physicians or medical center staff or are involved with the care of young children. These groups were targeted through mailings to associations such as the Louisiana Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), Louisiana Chapter of the College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP), and the Louisiana Association of Educators of Young Children (LAEYC).

Mailing lists were continually sought to invite members to become *Don't Kid Around* partners. Thanks to the sponsorship of the Louisiana Children's Trust Fund, packs of referral cards and promotional placards were provided free of charge.



## Conclusions

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Because there was no vehicle owner follow-up and no identifying records were kept, evaluation beyond a descriptive level is difficult and problematic. Consequently, Louisiana SAFE KIDS was not able to survey vehicle owners about changes in knowledge, attitudes or behaviors.

With over 570 *Don't Kid Around* Partners and over 14,000 post cards sent to Louisiana SAFE KIDS by concerned citizens, the Don't Kid Around program offered child safety seat and injury prevention information to those who need it most- drivers transporting young children.

The program was halted in July 2002 because changes in federal privacy legislation did not permit us to continue researching vehicle owner information.

Thank you to everyone who has been a part of *Don't Kid Around* and a supporter of Louisiana SAFE KIDS. Please continue to be a positive influence on those around you by being a role model and always buckling up everyone in your vehicle with kids properly buckled in the back seat.

Report prepared by Louisiana SAFE KIDS, Inc.  
August, 2002

## Appendix A

# Don't Kid Around!

*I observed an obvious violation of Louisiana's child passenger safety law (under age 5 not protected by a child safety seat or safety belt). I understand that a friendly reminder and educational materials will be sent to the vehicle's owners asking them to obey this life-saving law.*

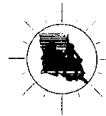
LA License Plate # \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Observation \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_ AM  
PM

Parish \_\_\_\_\_

Approximate age of child (Circle one): *Less than 1*   1   2   3   4   *Older*

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_



**LOUISIANA  
CHILDREN'S TRUST FUND**  
A Brighter Tomorrow for Louisiana's Children

A project of the  
*Louisiana*  
**SAFE  
KIDS**  
Coalition

THANK YOU FOR HELPING KEEP LOUISIANA'S KIDS SAFE

## Appendix B

## Please Send:

- ☐ Information on protecting your child from injury.
- ☐ Information on the "Don't Kid Around" program. Help us help others learn more about car seat safety by joining the "Don't Kid Around" program.

If you have any specific questions about the safety of your children, please call SAFE KIDS 568-2508 or 896-3986.

Please complete the following so we may send the above information to you.

What are the ages of your children?

- ☐ infant   ☐ toddler   ☐ pre-school   ☐ school age

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_



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